

HONORING HOSPITAL CORPSMAN THIRD CLASS
MAXTON SOVIAK

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I am here today on the floor to remember the life of Navy Fleet Marine Force Hospital Corpsman Third Class Maxton Soviak. Max was a 22-year-old native of Berlin Heights, OH, a young patriot who died far too soon in service to all of us.

Max was one of 13 brave American service men and women who were tragically killed when an ISIS-K suicide bomber in Kabul on August 26 exploded a bomb that wounded dozens of others and killed many Afghans. He was there working to evacuate Americans and Afghan allies from a city that was suddenly overrun by the Taliban.

Max was a special guy. They say he was quick to make friends and quick to earn the respect of those he interacted with. As a student at Edison High School, Max was a member of the wrestling team that won the 2016 State championship and a football team that made it to the semifinals 2 years in a row. He was an athlete and a leader. He achieved the rank of Life Scout, the second highest rank a scout can reach. He was a lover of the outdoors, spending his free time doing rock climbing, skiing, scuba diving, and other extreme sports.

And he was one of those rare individuals who, at a young age, had that drive to defend his Nation as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. He joined the Navy and was signed as a Fleet Marine Force hospital corpsman, serving side by side with the infantry marines of the Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment.

Affectionately known as a “devil doc,” a takeoff on the Marines’ “devil dog” nickname, Max was a member of a select group of medical specialists trained to operate side by side with the men and women of the U.S. Marine Corps on the frontlines, just as he was doing in Kabul the day he died, helping evacuate Americans and our allies who were fleeing the tyranny of the Taliban.

In his far too short time with us, Max did his duty, and he did it with distinction and valor. He took care of his marines and, while in Kabul, cared for innocent Afghans who were fleeing the Taliban.

Kathleen, Max’s sister, said it well: “In Maxton’s final days, he spent his time helping others stay alive, as he had developed a passion for saving the lives of others, so much so, that he was willing to risk his own life and made the ultimate sacrifice.” So true.

Before the attack in Kabul, Max was able to FaceTime his mom, Rachel. As they said their good-byes, his mom told him to be safe.

Max replied:

Don’t worry, mom, my guys got me. They won’t let anything happen to me.

That was the last time she spoke to him before Max and his fellow marines and soldiers gave their lives in service of keeping so many others—moms,

dads, kids, and fellow servicemembers—safe. He didn’t want anything to happen to us.

For his bravery and sacrifice, Max was awarded the Purple Heart and a Combat Action Ribbon. When he came home to Berlin Heights, OH, he was greeted with a hero’s welcome that he richly deserved. Families lined the streets as his casket, draped in the American flag, was brought home to his family.

When I visited his hometown over the weekend to deliver an American flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of his service, there were flags in every yard and posters and flowers; you could sense the love and support for Max and for his family from his grateful neighbors. Yesterday, hundreds came to the Edison High School football stadium, where Max had helped lead the Chargers to victory time and time again; they came to pay their last respects to an honorable American life taken too soon in service of all of us.

Max’s sacrifice, along with that of the other marines and soldiers who died or were grievously wounded that day, reminds us of how blessed we are to have such courageous and selfless fellow citizens willing to stand guard for us. We must be grateful for the sacrifices our troops make every day to keep America safe. My thoughts and prayers are with Max’s parents, Kip and Rachel Soviak, and his entire family, as well as those he knew and who loved him. May God comfort them in the days and weeks ahead.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL RYLEE MCCOLLUM

Ms. LUMMIS. Madam President, Wyoming’s heart is heavy with grief today. I rise to honor the life, sacrifice, and memory of Wyoming native LCpl Rylee McCollum. He, along with 12 of his fellow servicemembers, lost their lives while defending the airport in Kabul as American citizens and allies escaped the clutches of the Taliban. Their selfless service and sacrifice will be honored and remembered, and they will be forever cherished by a grateful nation.

Rylee was a Wyoming guy through and through. His life’s goal of serving in the U.S. Marine Corps began seemingly while he was still in diapers, before he could even comprehend what that entailed. He was born with the heart of a soldier.

He joined the military right out of high school. He heard the call to defend our Nation, and he didn’t hesitate to answer that call. He had plans to become a history teacher and coach once he finished his commitment to the Marines. He was about to become a father.

I had the opportunity to meet with some of Rylee’s family this past weekend. I had the great honor of expressing my deepest appreciation of Rylee’s sacrifice to them in person on behalf of a very grateful Wyoming. Wyoming’s very special way of honoring its beloved Rylee was on full display last Friday.

People waving American flags lined the streets of Jackson to give Rylee a hero’s welcome as his remains were returned home. The people of Wyoming are heartbroken but infinitely proud of his bravery and sacrifice.

Just yesterday, September 13, 2021, Rylee’s family welcomed into the world his daughter, Levi Rylee Rose—8 pounds, 10 ounces. Although she will never meet her father, who was killed before she was born, she will be surrounded by love from mother Gigi, proud grandfather Jim McCollum, Rylee’s sisters, and many other relatives who will share with Levi what a wonderful and heroic father she had.

Our hearts, our love, our prayers, and our embrace are with Rylee’s wife, child, friends, and family as they grieve his loss and remember his bravery.

Madam President, Wyoming will never ever forget.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Nebraska.

HONORING CORPORAL DAEGAN WILLIAM TYELER
PAGE

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in memory and in honor of Corporal Page, a 23-year-old marine from Nebraska. He gave his life defending Americans and our allies in the chaos of the Kabul airport as many tried to escape the capture of Afghanistan by a band of blood-thirsty terrorists.

Corporal Page is 1 of 13 heroes who gave his life that day defending the Kabul airport in the midst of that chaotic evacuation. The American people owe these men and women a debt of gratitude that we will never be able to repay.

Corporal Page lost his life while honoring our Nation’s promise that we would leave no one behind. He and his fellow marines never wavered. They didn’t fail in executing their duty. They were given an impossible mission, and these men and women fought to the end. It is now our duty to stand with these families, the families of each of these 13, and to honor their sacrifices.

Last Friday, in Omaha, thousands and thousands and thousands of Nebraskans lined the streets to give Corporal Page a hero’s welcome as his body was returned home. As his family said, “Our hearts are still broken, but we are the lucky few who know what it is” to have the entire city of Omaha give you a hug.

We are called to gather around one another. We are called to join with the grieving and to mourn the loss of these brave men and women.

Corporal Page was a Nebraskan who made his family and his State and his entire Nation proud. He left for boot camp shortly after graduating from Millard South High School, and he was proud to serve in the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment with his fellow marines.

He enjoyed playing hockey. One of my kids played hockey against him. He

went to Millard South High School, but he played hockey for Westside and the Fremont team my kids played on. They got to compete against him and know him as a competitor.

He enjoyed hunting, being in the outdoors. He especially enjoyed the water. He was a Boy Scout in Troop 331. He loved spending time with his family and friends. He was a member of his local church, the Lutheran church of Millard, St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Millard.

Like so many Nebraskans, he was a die-hard sports fan, his favorite team being the Chicago Blackhawks.

Corporal Page gave the last full measure of devotion to his country. His mission was clear. In the chaos of Kabul, Corporal Page was there to protect and save lives, and that is exactly what he did. Marines held the line and pulled both Americans and our Afghan allies to safety. Marines pulled children out of hell, gave them water, and got them to safety.

Corporal Page gave his life so that others would live. Nebraskans will never forget him. Heroes like Corporal Page didn't fail us, and we can't forget them. We must keep our promise to honor his family, to teach our families about their sacrifice, and to strive to live lives of gratitude. It is times like this where we rediscover the heart of our country. Communities that pull together—as happened last Friday and will happen this Friday at his funeral at St. Paul's Lutheran—we pray together, make meals for each other, and we are reminded of the sacrifice so many families have made.

Today, and in the days to come, we in Nebraska will honor Corporal Page, and we across this country will honor the 13 who fell that day. Your sacrifice is a debt we can never repay.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL DAVID LEE ESPINOZA

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of David Lee Espinoza, who died in defense of our Nation on August 26.

David was a marine who was helping with the evacuation of the Kabul airport when he was murdered by a suicide bomber, along with 12 other service men and women who so senselessly had their lives taken from them that day. His mother got the call that every parent of every servicemember fears when she was told at 2:30 in the morning that her son had lost his life in Afghanistan.

David was just 20 years old. David was a lifelong Texan. He was born in Laredo and raised nearby in Rio Bravo, where he was the eldest of four children.

David always wanted to be a marine. And as a child, he loved to consider different military strategies as he played with toy soldiers. David joined the Marines the summer after he graduated from LBJ High School in Laredo in

2019, and he spent time serving in Jordan before being sent to Kabul the week before he died. It has been said that other service branches wanted David to join their ranks, but David always knew he was meant to be a marine.

David was a beloved son, a brother, a friend, and a fellow marine. He was a patriot who had a passion for service, and our Nation can never repay the debt that we owe to David and to his family for giving what President Lincoln hailed as "the last full measure of devotion."

Yesterday, at David's funeral mass, Father Francisco Stodola said:

As tragic as this loss is, and as deep as the wounds of sorrow have pierced the hearts of his loved ones, and particularly his mother—because a mother would rather lose an arm or a leg than to have to lose a child—we can console ourselves with the fact that David died doing what he wanted to do with the people he wanted to do it with.

We will remember David and the incredible sacrifice he gave for our country. He will also be remembered by his community. The Laredo City Council has already voted to name the road in front of LBJ High School, David's alma mater, as the "Lance Corporal David Lee Espinoza Memorial Boulevard."

To David's parents, Elizabeth Holguin and Victor Manuel Dominguez, and to his siblings, Angel Martin Espinoza, Victor Manuel Dominguez, Jr., and Delilah Alyssa Dominguez, I want to say that your son and your brother was a brave patriot who will never be forgotten. Heidi and I are lifting you up in prayer as you mourn the loss of your beloved David.

The 91st Psalm is sometimes called the soldier's or the warrior's psalm because it asks the Lord for protection against many foes, and it assures us that the Lord will be with us in times of trouble:

Because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble.

I will deliver him and honor him.

David's sacrifice was not in vain. He died as he lived, giving of himself in the service of others. David now rests from his labors, having been a good and faithful servant.

And to the families of all of those whose lives were lost in Afghanistan this year and in the 20 years that preceded it, know that your sacrifice, know that your loss was not in vain. America is better. America is safer. American lives are more secure because your sons and daughters answered the call. America is better and safer and more secure because David Espinoza answered the call. Texas and America are better for having known him, and we are in his debt.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL JARED SCHMITZ

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in hon-

oring the 13 servicemembers who were killed in action in Afghanistan last month doing what only the bravest and the most extraordinary Americans do: risking their lives to save others.

Every name has been mentioned on the floor today, but no matter how often we mention those names, we can't restore those individuals to their families. We can't restore them to their communities. We can't restore them to the people they served side by side with in the military.

But we can remember what they did—what they did collectively, and what they did individually.

One of the marines we tragically lost in the attack at Kabul airport was Lance Corporal Jared Schmitz of Wentzville, MO. He was just 6 months old on 9/11. In fact, we have seen that discussion many times of people who now give their life who were babies or not yet born on 9/11, 20 years ago.

Even though he was 6 months old on 9/11, he knew what he wanted to be, and he knew he wanted to be a marine by the time he was a sophomore in high school. He started training as a teenager, years before he enlisted. After graduating from Fort Zumwalt South High School in St. Peters, MO, he realized his dream. He joined the Marines and served as an infantryman.

Jared's father Mark Schmitz says his son—this is his father's quote and it is a great thing to be able to say about your son. Mark Schmitz said his son "looked out for everybody. Anyone who needed help, he was there. He was selfless. He never put himself first."

Of course, we see another moment when he and the others whose lives were lost and others who were injured—some dramatically injured—didn't put themselves first; they put others first.

Friends remember Jared as energetic, as happy, as a faithful fan of the St. Louis Blues. Others will remember him as 1 of 56 Missourians who made the ultimate sacrifice as part of the either Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

We remember and honor each and every one of these heroes from our State and heroes from every State who have given their lives for freedom in this post-9/11 world, where we don't know exactly where the borders are or who—where the enemy might be at any given time, whether they are going to strike at home, where we live, or whether they are going to strike far away, where others are representing us and defending us. We remember and honor each of them.

We pray for their families and all who will feel the loss for the rest of their lives. We need to now do our part every day to live lives worthy of their sacrifice, never taking for granted the freedom and security we have because they were called to serve and support it and guarantee it for another generation.

I know I join all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we think of